

*Hand to
D/DCI/RM*

① A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT IRAN

Mr. PROXMIRE. Mr. President, reviewing a political crisis from the vantage point of hindsight poses certain temptations and pitfalls. It is a temptation to chart out what should have been and lay the blame on those in power who did not foresee correctly or analyze astutely. The order of events, the pattern or sequence of critical moves becomes clear with time, while often remaining cloudy during the actual period in question.

During a crisis, information is at a premium. It comes in piecemeal. It has not been analyzed. Events appear interrelated which on reflection are coincidental. There are gaps, sometimes critical gaps, in the flow of information. Imperfection and hesitation all too often are the hallmarks of human nature under stress.

What then should we have expected from our policymakers with regard to the Iranian revolution? It would be unfair to expect a grasp of the subtle or to prophesy the unusual. It is unrealistic to demand the anticipation of the un-

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expected or to manage events normally beyond control of a distant nation.

These aside, what we can expect is more in the nature of a list of negatives. There should have been no indifference to the full range of political outcomes; there should have been at least rudimentary planning for unlikely events; there should have been a willingness to step beyond bureaucratic or policy constraints to anticipate threats to our Nation's well being; there should have been a suspicion that concrete answers were illusory. We should have kept our eyes open and our ears on alert.

Mr. President, even by this conservative standard of negatives, there has been a U.S. policy failure in Iran. There is proof of what I say.

ADMINISTRATION POLICY TOWARD IRAN
PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

My interest in Iran has been longstanding. It would be difficult to count the number of speeches I have given on the senseless policy of arming Iran with sophisticated U.S. weaponry beyond its national security needs. Furthermore, in the course of the background investigation for the confirmation of G. William Miller, I began to consider what would happen in the absence or death of the Shah.

During March of 1978, I wrote letters to Secretary Vance and CIA Director Turner asking a series of questions about future events in Iran, should the Shah die. To the question "Who are the likely contenders for power if the Shah died suddenly" came the following answer:

The monarchy has been an enduring institution in Iran—over 2,500 years—and we believe the vast majority of Iranians favor continuation of this form of government. . . . We cannot predict whether the currently small radical terrorist groups will attempt to exploit the occasion of a changeover to seize power. Their success in any such effort would appear very doubtful. Other political opposition leaders could very well exert their efforts to reduce the power of the monarchy—but not to end it.

As for the question, "Does the present pervasive control exercised by the Shah over all aspects of Iranian public life and expression make it likely that there will be among politically active and aware Iranians a powerful urge to release repressed actions and feelings and a strong reaction against continuing his system of rule?"

The answer was basically that liberalization was continuing to involve more and more people in the affairs of the government, thus facilitating a "larger consensus."

Perhaps the most disturbing of all, however, was the information that our intelligence community was not collecting information on critical internal developments in Iran. Therefore, I again wrote Admiral Turner urging that more attention be paid to making sure information on Iran was extensive, current, and detailed. His reply shed no additional light on the matter.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all the correspondence mentioned be printed in the Record, along with an article from Fortune magazine. It should be noted that individual names have been deleted from these letters.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

MARCH 14, 1978.

HON. CYRUS VANCE,
Secretary of State,
Department of State,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: My service with this and other committees has made me increasingly aware of the influence of Iran on the American economy, and on defense planning and foreign policy. Recent hearings have now reminded me sharply that the government of Iran is a one-man regime, thoroughly controlled and directed by the Shah.

I am therefore interested in what would happen if the Shah should die or be killed suddenly. Experts outside the government have given me their views on this subject and I request your assessment of it as well. Please include in your reply responses to these questions:

(1) The loyalty of government and military officials in Iran appears to be directly and personally to the Shah, rather than to a system of government or to each other: How much of this loyalty might be transferred to a successor regime, such as the regency by the Queen provided in the present formal succession arrangements?

(2) The Shah's present ruling methods appear to perpetuate and exploit constant rivalry among his subordinates. Can they be expected to offer unified support to a successor regime or is a long period of squabbling and disorganization likely?

(3) Who are the likely contenders for power if the Shah dies suddenly? The military has been a stabilizing force during transition periods in some other developing countries. For reasons of culture and history, the Iranian military apparently has a relatively low status and Iranians prefer other national models of modernization and efficiency. Is it therefore likely that, in addition to struggles by and among military officers for power and influence in the course of succession, there will also be further destabilizing contests between civilian elite groups and military officers?

(4) Does the present pervasive control exercised by the Shah over all aspects of Iranian public life and expression make it likely that there will be among politically active and aware Iranians a powerful urge to release repressed actions and feelings, and a strong reaction against continuing his system of rule?

(5) Is our commitment to the Shah so complete that we would have to start over again from scratch with any of the most likely successor regimes? Are such regimes likely to have strong anti-American feelings? Have we current contingency planning for the Shah's sudden death and its most likely political and economic consequences for us.

I realize that an examination of the consequences of the Shah's retirement or lingering death could also be important and interesting. However, I prefer now to concentrate entirely on the situation which would be likely to follow his sudden death from accident, disease, or assassination, since this would be most likely to produce the most severe crisis and present us with the most difficult decisions.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM PROXMIRE,
U.S. Senator.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, D.C., March 30, 1978.

HON. WILLIAM PROXMIRE,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR PROXMIRE: Secretary Vance has requested me to reply to your letter of

March 14 containing a number of questions about Iran. The issues you have raised are indeed important and receive careful and continuing examination in the Department. The following paragraphs are numbered according to the numeration in your letter.

1. The establishment of the Regency Council and designation of the Empress as Regent in the event of the Shah's death before the oldest son reaches maturity has, to the best of our knowledge, wide support throughout Iran. The military has strongly supported the present Shah, as it did the Shah's father, and we expect that this support would be extended to the Empress in her role of continuing the monarchical order. Iranian nationalism is a strong motivating force on the Iranian military and will be a major factor in the military's backing for the transition to the legitimate successor.

2. Within the Iranian political structure there are rivalries for power and influence, such as exist in any political system. Iranian political leaders are not now "unified" with respect to formulation or execution of particular policies and we would not expect complete homogeneity at the time of transition. However, these differences are likely to be within normal and manageable bounds, particularly as institutions supporting the present form of government increase in strength and acceptance.

3. The monarchy has been an enduring institution in Iran—over 2500 years—and we believe the vast majority of Iranians favor continuation of this form of government. There is no generally recognized rival to the Crown Prince for the succession. However, a difference of views exists on how much power the monarch should have. The Iranian military has been loyal, as I noted in paragraph 1 above, and we do not foresee at this time seriously destabilizing contests between civilian and military elites. They would share an interest in a smooth transition and a continuation of economic and military modernization.

We cannot predict whether the currently small radical terrorist groups will attempt to exploit the occasion of a changeover to seize power. Their success in any such effort would appear very doubtful. Other political opposition leaders could very well exert their efforts to reduce the power of the monarchy—but not to end it.

4. Over the last 16 months or so a political liberalization has been taking place in Iran and many groups and individuals are speaking out frankly and openly against various policies and practices of the government. Complaints range from the extent of the Shah's power to the functioning of the judiciary and to the prices of goods and housing. The Shah stated publicly in the aftermath of the Tabriz riot that the liberalization will continue. This policy is encouraging, as it involves more and more people in the affairs of the government and facilitates a larger consensus.

5. Although our relations with the Shah have been very close for three decades, American officials deal with a broad range of official and private Iranians, and we foresee no particular difficulty in working closely with a successor government. We believe that the length and strength of the Iran-U.S. friendship, as well as the factors which underlie it, make it likely that a mutually beneficial relationship will continue under any likely future Iranian leadership.

If you believe that it would be useful to you, I would be pleased to ask one or two of our Iranian specialists at the Department to call on you at your convenience to go into greater depth on these matters.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS J. BENNET, Jr.,
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations.

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MARCH 9, 1978.

Admiral STANSFIELD TURNER,
Director of Central Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, D.C.

DEAR ADMIRAL TURNER: My service with this and other committees has made me increasingly aware of the influence of Iran on the American economy, and on defense planning and foreign policy. Our recent discussion reminded me sharply that the government of Iran is a one-man regime, thoroughly controlled and directed by the Shah.

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Best wishes.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM PROXMIRE,
U.S. Senator.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, D.C., March 28, 1978.

Admiral STANSFIELD TURNER,
Director of Central Intelligence,
Central Intelligence Agency,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR ADMIRAL TURNER: This follows up my letter of March 15 on the questioning of Iran's future after the Shah's death. Your analyst (deleted) briefed my staff and answered the questions in my letter—no further reply to those is necessary now.

(Deleted) told us that he is preparing an intelligence memorandum on precisely this subject. I was disturbed to hear that there is no current assessment or contingency planning on this very important issue and that the CIA's attention to internal affairs in Iran is limited. I believe that the 2-3 year period

following the Shah's death may well be dangerous to our military and intelligence capabilities, and—of particular interest and concern to me—to the international economy and the stability of the dollar.

I urge you to ensure that the CIA's information on Iran is extensive, current, and detailed. Please make a copy of (deleted) assessment available to me as soon as it is a completed CIA product ready for circulation for the comment of other agencies.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM PROXMIRE,
U.S. Senator.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY,
Washington, D.C., Apr. 15, 1978.

Hon. WILLIAM PROXMIRE,
Committee on Appropriations,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR SENATOR PROXMIRE: Thank you for your letter of March 28 concerning (deleted) briefing of your staff on Iran's future after the Shah's death. I believe I can clarify the matter of your comment about our limited attention to this problem area.

Let me assure you that analysts like (deleted) devote a great deal of time and attention to the internal affairs of Iran. (Deleted), for example, has worked on this area for twenty-five years. Our review of this area is continuous and detailed.

From time to time, as circumstances warrant, we prepare an assessment of the situation. That is what (deleted) is currently preparing and will be pleased to make it available to you when it is fully coordinated and completed.

Your concern about contingency planning is a policy matter and I suggest you might want to take it up with the State Department.

I appreciate your interest in this vital area of the world.

Yours sincerely,

STANSFIELD TURNER,
Director.

IRAN

Even the elaborate spectacle of Chinese Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing's recent tour of the U.S. could provide only a fleeting diversion from the gravest foreign-policy setback the U.S. has suffered since the Carter Administration took office. Indeed, no sooner had the honored guest returned to Asia than he himself was publicly criticizing his Washington hosts for their lack of resolution in handling the crisis in Iran. However indelicate this may have seemed, Teng had a point. For the fall of a pro-Western regime, and the seizure of power by an Islamic government of uncertain orientation—and even more uncertain stability—have placed in peril U.S. interests that are intrinsically more vital than those that sent Americans to fight and die in Indochina.

There are, in fact, some critical connecting threads—not instantly obvious, but politically serious—between these seemingly remote historical happenings. In the first place, a measure of the hesitation and anxiety of American policymakers, as they confronted the crisis in Iran, can be ascribed to the haunting memory of the presumptions and misjudgments underlying the Vietnam tragedy. In the second place, the opening of diplomatic relations with Communist China could hardly fail to bring back another bleak memory—the bitter and futile debate over "Who lost China?" that raged through U.S. politics two and three decades ago. The remembrance should temper the polemics—and elevate the purposes—of all debate today over the latest great misadventure of U.S. diplomacy.

Perhaps the only incontestable fact in such

a debate is the high cost of the failure in Iran. In the words of Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, the curtailment of oil supplies from Iran looms as "prospectively more serious" to the U.S. than the Middle East oil embargo of 1973-74. But as the Secretary himself earlier noted, the geopolitical consequences of the upheaval in Iran—sharing a 1,250-mile border with the Soviet Union and feeling the pressure of Soviet encroachment in other nearby nations—"undoubtedly exceed in importance" even the impact on American and Western energy needs. So National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski cannot be charged with hyperbole in picturing an "arc of crisis" throughout the strategic area.

The causes of the Iranian debacle are obviously less simple to state. They cannot be grasped without appreciating the whole environment of U.S. policy controlling our relations with the Shah over the last decade. The quantum leap in the American commitment to the Iranian monarch was triggered directly by Britain's decision, announced in 1968, to withdraw its forces from "east of Suez." Before then, Washington's relations with the Shah had been friendly, but discreetly at arm's length. Though the CIA had helped to return him to the throne after his brief flight abroad in 1953 during his confrontation with Mohammed Mossadegh, the U.S. government remained sensitive to the dangers inherent in the autocratic style of the Shah's forced modernization drive, and used its moderating influence accordingly. The reserve started to break down toward the end of the Johnson Administration, largely as a result of the personal impression the Shah made on the President. Overriding Pentagon and State Department objections, Lyndon Johnson agreed to step up arms shipments to Iran—as a show of appreciation for the Shah's willingness to send a medical team to Vietnam.

In 1969 Henry Kissinger, soon after moving into the White House as Richard Nixon's National Security Adviser, ordered a policy study of how the vacuum left by the British withdrawal from the Persian Gulf should be filled. Rejecting a direct American role, Nixon opted for "regional cooperation," based on the twin pillars of Iran and Saudi Arabia. At this stage, the internal stability of the Shah's regime was taken for granted. "The whole assumption was that the Shah was well entrenched and that there was no foreseeable threat to that stability," recalls one of those actively taking part in the creation of the policy. "I feel that I was equally as guilty, and that Mr. Kissinger and the previous Administrations were equally as guilty and oblivious as the Carter people." To date, such candid contrition is not shared by all the architects of the policy.

The few warnings that were sounded went ignored. In March, 1969, the National Security Council endorsed a "Presidential Review Memorandum on Arms Sales" to so-called "forward-defense" countries, including Iran. Prepared almost a year earlier in the Johnson Administration by the Pentagon's Office of International Security Affairs (ISA), the paper raised caveats about Iran's internal stability. But its cautions were soon forgotten. So, too, were subsequent ISA objections that the arms sales to Iran were getting out of hand. As one senior official who followed this process remembers, "The revealing thing was that the warnings did not come from the Iran experts in the bureaucracy, and were consistently rejected by them."

Nixon and Kissinger put their new policy before the Shah during a crucial meeting in May, 1972. Returning from a Moscow summit and still aglow from their earlier visit to Peking, they stopped in Tehran to install the Shah as their regional proponent of the "Nixon Doctrine." A shrewd trader, the Shah laid down his conditions. Along with CIA

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support to help the Kurds fight their rebellion in neighboring Iraq, he most of all wanted a U.S. promise to sell him whatever military hardware he asked for, and to supply as many as 50,000 technicians, military or civilian, to take care of training and maintenance. Nixon agreed.

In July, 1972, a Kissinger memorandum instructed the bureaucracy accordingly. Removing the last restraints, this open-ended commitment to the Shah was preceded by no serious effort to examine the sociopolitical underpinnings on which any "structure of peace" must stand or fall. Swiftly thereafter, U.S. military sales to Iran soared. From a relatively modest level of \$113 million in fiscal year 1970, they had climbed to \$2.1 billion by 1973. How his military ambitions affected the Shah's demand for higher oil prices is a matter for conjecture. What is clear is that the quadrupling of oil revenues gave him the means to pursue these ambitions to the hilt.

The rationale for these vast shipments of sophisticated weaponry—some \$12 billion in orders were in the pipeline when the Shah was overthrown—was the hollow argument that they would contribute to regional stability. When the crisis in Iran came, the Shah's regime had an overabundance of supersonic fighters, including seventy-eight of the advanced F-14's—but ran short of tear gas. Far from stabilizing the situation, the arms became a major source of popular unrest, arousing bitter resentment against the wasteful diversion of the country's economic resources, the corruption rampant throughout the Iranian procurement program, and the culturally jarring invasion of thousands of foreign personnel and their dependents. It is a historical irony that by enabling the Shah to pursue his grandiose ambition of surpassing West Germany by the year 2000, the oil bonanza sowed the seeds of his own destruction.

But at the time, the Shah's spending was even seen to be one more reason for Washington to support him. For every \$1 the U.S. spent on Iranian oil, the Shah was spending \$2 in the U.S. The procurement side of the Defense Department, as well as the arms makers, was delighted that military sales to Iran provided the means to stretch out production runs. At a time when America's trade balance was dipping deeper into the red, the surplus of trade with Iran seemed like a godsend. Meanwhile, the Shah kept endearing himself to Washington in little ways—such as by letting Iran participate in the International Control Commission in Vietnam in 1974.

Other warnings came—and went unheeded. The original Nixon-Kissinger decision to take the lid off arms sales to Iran took cheer from the presumed influence this would give to the U.S. But a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report noted correctly in July, 1976, that the policy was in fact giving the Shah "a curious kind of 'reverse influence' on the U.S." The U.S. commitment to him had acquired a momentum that made it ever more difficult to control, much less reverse.

In this atmosphere, the message filtered quickly through the bureaucracy that devil's advocates were not wanted. "Until recently, you couldn't give away intelligence on Iran," a CIA analyst testified last January. The Administration worried that critical reporting might jeopardize congressional support for the military-sales program. Despite evidence that the program was "out of control," Senate Foreign Relations Committee investigators charged in July, 1976, that "senior State Department officials appear not to have been prepared to tolerate open debate on . . . unrestricted arms sales to Iran."

The problem of political reporting were compounded in Tehran. The U.S. Embassy there was handicapped by a chronic shortage of officers who spoke Farsi. At the same time, U.S. diplomats became increasingly worried that any contacts with opposition sources

were being reported back to the Shah through the ubiquitous secret police, SAVAK. Rather than risk imperial displeasure, one ambassador warned an enterprising political officer to be "more discreet." On other occasions, the same ambassador felt that he had to mask his own worries by inviting a visitor to ask the Shah whether Iran's arms purchases were not perhaps more than the system could bear.

The American Embassy was not alone in its record of unreality. The U.S. press generally conveyed no audible alarms over dangers ahead. The community of American businessmen and their dependents in Iran swelled to more than 40,000. But their home offices were apparently no better informed, and no more prescient, than the State Department.

The best communications evidently belonged to the Shah himself. He could always outflank both the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the State Department through his trusted and adroit ambassador in Washington, his onetime son-in-law, Ardeshir Zahedi. Zahedi, whose departure now threatens social Washington with its worst caviar crisis in recent memory, was a master at using his direct line to his friend Henry Kissinger. Till the bitter end, he was equally adept at getting his message directly to Brzezinski.

The use of the American "back channel" of the CIA to keep informed on what was happening in the opposition was sparse and ineffective. This pattern did not change even when former CIA Director Richard Helms served in Tehran as ambassador from 1973 to 1976. Helms concentrated on cultivating the Shah, and left the station to its own devices. Indeed, Iranian internal developments were never seen as the Tehran station's principal concern. Even the new station chief assigned this year was not picked because of his Iranian expertise; like most of his staff, he does not speak Farsi. Besides the Kurdish problem, the station's main mission was to monitor Soviet activities, both in Iran and in the Soviet Union. The invaluable electronic surveillance installations along the Soviet border increased inhibitions about offending the host country. Consequently, the CIA obtained most of its material on the opposition from SAVAK. Reflecting the Shah's own preoccupation with leftwingers, SAVAK concentrated on student activists—even extending its activities to the U.S., with Washington's tacit permission—but it ignored the more important alliance between the disgruntled bazaar merchants and the mullahs. According to the staff report of the House Intelligence Committee of January 24, "No CIA intelligence reporting based on sources within the religious opposition occurred during a two-year period ending in November, 1977."

Although more aggressive embassy and CIA reporting resumed in the second half of 1977, it was not until last September that significant insights on the political opposition first reached the desks of key policymakers in the State Department's "Morning Summary." With respect to the CIA, the investigators of the House Intelligence Committee found that "there was absolutely no reporting on the internal situation based on sources within the opposition party during the first quarter of 1978." Despite the prophetic-sounding title of "Iran After the Shah," a twenty-three-page Intelligence Assessment published in August, 1978, flatly stated in its preface that "Iran is not in a revolutionary, or even in a 'pre-revolutionary' situation."

One can therefore sympathize with the frustration that drove the President to dash off his now famous "Cy, Zbig, and Stan" note on November 11. Addressing himself to his Secretary of State, his National Security Adviser and his director of Central Intelli-

gence, Admiral Stansfield Turner, Carter complained that something was obviously wrong about "the quality of our political intelligence." By the date of this lament, unfortunately, the time had already passed when the U.S. could have exerted its influence to persuade the Shah to turn himself into a truly constitutional monarch and to co-opt important elements of the opposition.

And yet—would better intelligence have changed U.S. policy? It seems doubtful. As a classified staff report of the House Intelligence Committee commented in August, 1978, "History provides ample illustration to suggest the futility of warning if decision-makers are unwilling to accept a warning or are unprepared to deal with the terms in which the warning comes."

Such a lesson was confirmed by the experience of Professor James Bill of the University of Texas, one of a handful of academic experts who had correctly analyzed the explosive pressures rising underneath the Shah's regime. Invited to attend a seminar of State Department Iranian experts in March, 1978, he presented a paper entitled "Monarchy in Collapse." As Bill recalled later, "The State Department people were very receptive, but I did not see my views reflected in any changes in policy." Warnings like these did not move the policymakers. Even the assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs had relatively little time to spend on Iran, being engrossed in the diplomacy leading to Camp David. Weeks after the seminar, a presumably "receptive" official still objected vehemently when a colleague was bold enough to qualify a description of the Shah's regime as "one of the most stable" with the weasel word "perhaps." (It reminded me of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*," recalls a witness to the exchange. "Unless you've been in an insane asylum yourself, you just don't know what it's really like.") One top-level Administration official put his finger on the crux of the problem: "Our so-called intelligence failure was of the worst kind you can get: the reporting was imbibing the presuppositions of the policy."

There is no evidence that the Carter Administration made any serious effort to take a fresh look at these presuppositions. Like Kissinger before him, Brzezinski saw the Shah as what he termed the Administration's regional influential. In the course of Jimmy Carter's two personal meetings with the Shah during his first year in office—first in Washington in November, 1977, and six weeks later in Tehran—the President restated this reliance in the most effusive terms. "Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world," the President intoned in his New Year's Eve toast to his hosts. "This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to the respect and the admiration and the love which your people give you." A week later, a wave of angry Islamic demonstrators, shouting their hatred of the Shah, started to sweep over the "island of stability." But another nine months passed before the President first took public notice that the Shah was in trouble.

While the basic policy toward Iran remained unchanged, however, its execution became complicated by two other lofty policy goals of the Carter Administration. The lesser of them was Carter's commitment, strongly backed by Cyrus Vance, to put a ceiling on American arms sales abroad. The difficulty was "solved" by a mix of artful figure-juggling and the exercise of the presidential prerogative to invoke "special circumstances." When it appeared that the planned sale of frigates to Iran would crack the ceiling, for example, it was left for the West Germans to build the hulls. When it came to the \$1.2-billion sale of seven Boeing 707 "Airborne Warning and Control Sys-

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tem Aircraft"—each loaded with over \$100 million worth of the most exotic electronic gear—the President simply made an exception.

More consequential were the problems caused by the Administration's human-rights policy. Its defenders dismiss the notion that pronouncements from Washington were needed to open the Iranians' eyes to the repressiveness of the Shah's regime. The human-rights policy certainly did not cause the pressures that eventually overpowered the Shah, and the efforts to magnify its importance amount to exercises in self-justification by those who had ignored these pressures in earlier years. Nevertheless, the human-rights policy did have a confusing effect in both Washington and Tehran.

On the Washington end, according to one State Department insider, "The human-rights people muddled the policy debate by giving a goody-goody quality to the argument that the U.S. should actively push the Shah toward constitutional reforms in order to pacify at least some of his opposition. This made it that much easier for the 'realists' to dismiss the argument when such an approach, just conceivably, might still have worked." At the same time, the State Department did not feel that it could, in good conscience, exempt the Shah from the human-rights policy altogether. "We had a lot of discussions with the Shah about liberalization," insists a top-level State Department official. "Whether on his own initiative or under our influence, the Shah did say in the summer that he was prepared to take risks." According to the same source, he was also made aware that any bloody put-down of popular revolt "would not have been well received in the U.S."

A revealing insight into how the Khomeini camp perceived the human-rights policy comes from Princeton University Professor Richard Falk, a human-rights activist who, with former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, traveled to Iran and Paris in January at the invitation of Islamic opposition groups. Citing remarks by Mehdi Bazargan—Khomeini's senior political adviser and later his choice for the premiership—Falk reports that the proclamation of Carter's human-rights policy did embolden the religious opposition. "It was quite a surprise to me," admits Falk. "I had thought that this was right-wing propaganda, used for domestic politics in this country. But Bazargan confirmed it. They took appearance for reality."

The impact on the Shah's actions reflected the worst of both possible worlds. Apparently persuaded that this was necessary to keep Washington's support, the Shah made concessions—like some easing of press censorship and the release of prisoners—which were just enough to convince his enemies that he was losing his grip, but never enough to satisfy them. When he got advice from some of his hard-line advisers to crack down hard, he was inhibited by the fear that the U.S. would not stand for a bloodbath. Precisely this, in fact, was the message that came across on September 10, two days after "bloody Friday," when President Carter interrupted his Camp David peacemaking efforts to telephone the Shah to express his regret over the loss of life and his hope that the movement toward political liberalization would continue.

Even this telephone call, however, did not yet signify that the Administration had fully awakened to the magnitude of the crisis. ("I doubt they ever really did," laments one member of the Carter team.) With Carter basking in the glories of Camp David, Brzezinski pressing toward full normalization of relations with Peking, and Vance laboring on SALT and the Middle East, the job of keeping on top of the rapidly deteriorating situation in Iran fell to fourth-level people, all dedicated and able, but badly in need of the active support of their principals to give

their views clout and coherence. Country director Henry Precht at the State Department, his Pentagon counterpart Robert Murray, and U.S. Navy Captain Gary Sick at the National Security Council were four bosses removed from the President.

Yet it was during these crucial weeks of September and early October that time ran out for the Shah. Had he departed in September—so U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan has suggested to recent visitors—he still might have been able to leave behind the framework of a constitutional monarchy. But sources in Washington contend that this judgment was not reflected in the embassy's reporting at the time. And the fact that Sullivan felt it safe to be away on vacation for much of August hardly suggests that he sensed the urgency of the crisis.

Thus, it appears that by the time the first top-level machinery was set up to deal with the crisis, the hour for decision had already passed. Not till November 2 did the first meeting of the Special Coordinating Committee take place, chaired by Brzezinski and composed of Vance, Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and CIA Director Stansfield Turner. Energy Secretary Schlesinger was brought in to the group in December. Operating immediately under it and meeting more frequently—but starting only November 21—was a working group of deputies chaired by Brzezinski's No. 2, David Aaron. Late in December, a third interagency group was set up under the chairmanship of David Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, to deal with such everyday operational problems as the safety of Americans, the security of sensitive military equipment, the closing of the banks, and the collapse of oil production.

In the last analysis, what most matters is the vision of American leadership that the President brought to this, his first great crisis. His notion turned out to be a very limited one. Reduced to its essentials, it was to leave the crisis to the Shah to handle. With military intervention rejected as pointless from the outset by everyone, the only real options were whether to lay down to the Shah the conditions for American support, or whether to promise him American support for whatever he himself deemed necessary.

From the start, the President chose the second option. The shadow of Vietnam showed through the explanation of one White House source: "We thought the Shah had been around for a long time and knew the country better than we did. We'd just been through the lessons of Vietnam, not just the fall of Thieu but the overthrow of Diem. People have long memories in this Administration, and there was a certain genuine modesty about our capacity to know what was the right political move to make in a situation like Iran."

The immediate difficulty in all this was that the Shah, whom the President and other American officials had known as a self-confident, imperious man of decision, had retreated into a state of ever-deepening depression that left him brooding and indecisive. Having progressively cut himself off from reality by his own autocratic style, his world of gaudy visions quickly collapsed. From September onward, and with increasing frequency, the same Shah who would have bristled at foreigners trying to tell him how to run his country was fretfully calling in U.S. Ambassador William Sullivan and his British colleague, Sir Anthony Parsons, to solicit their advice. But Sullivan's instructions were to refrain carefully from prescribing courses of action and to venture only occasional caveats if one of the Shah's ideas sounded too far off the mark. "We didn't want him to cross that line," stressed one White House official.

The issue of whether the U.S. should lead

or follow the Shah was once again put to the President in early December. This time the question was posed by New York investment banker and former Under Secretary of State George Ball. The initial suggestion to call in Ball had come from his erstwhile protégé, Secretary of the Treasury W. Michael Blumenthal. The only Cabinet member to visit Iran during the crisis, Blumenthal had been struck by the transformation of the Shah when he saw him on his swing of oil-producing states in November. Both Brzezinski and Vance agreed that it was a good idea to bring in an experienced man who knew the area for a fresh review of the facts. "We felt very uneasy about our data base," explained one White House official—a Washingtonian way of admitting that the Administration felt at sea.

Though he warned that it was already very late in the day, Ball accepted the week-long assignment. According to sources familiar with his secret recommendations, he concluded that the only way in which the Shah might still salvage something was to turn himself into a constitutional monarch and to leave the appointment of a civilian government to a representative "Council of Notables." Ball personally presented his conclusions to the President in the afternoon of December 13. In an hour-long discussion, with only Brzezinski attending, the President stuck to his policy of detachment, i.e., it was simply not right to tell the Shah how to deal with a crisis in his own country.

Although there is very little likelihood that at so late a stage Ball's recommendations would have changed history, what is significant are the grounds on which the proposals were rejected. In effect, the President's rationale left the vital interests of the U.S. and its allies in the hands of a politically bankrupt ruler who had lost his grip and seemed desperate for the U.S. to exercise leadership. To the Shah's plaintive plea, "Mr. President, it's your world!", Carter's answer seemed to be, "Shahanshah, but it's your country!"

As the crisis fast evolved from a problem of disaster prevention to one of disaster containment, however, this pristine posture proved ever more difficult to hold. In the conduct of a great power, the old lesson was once again driven home—that not to decide is to decide. During a breakfast with White House correspondents on December 7, the President answered a question about the Shah's chances of survival with the candid sigh, "I don't know, I hope so. This is something in the hands of the people of Iran." This confession only precipitated a frantic White House effort to deny any intent to insinuate that the U.S. was putting distance between itself and the Shah. Not long thereafter, Carter infuriated the Khomeini movement by an implicit slap at the Ayatullah's incendiary statements from Paris, and the President lavished blessings on the short-lived regime of Bakhtiar as soon as he was appointed. In the face of the Iranian wave of xenophobia and anti-Americanism, moreover, the well-publicized supply of 200,000 barrels of fuel for the military inevitably was seen as another partisan American gesture. So also was the dispatch of U.S.A.F. General Robert Huyser, the deputy commander of American forces in Europe. But at least Huyser did succeed in dissuading the military from reacting to the Shah's departure with an ill-considered coup, which would almost certainly have resulted in the breakup of the forces and the eruption of civil war.

All this while, the Administration's signals to the region and to the U.S.S.R. continued to be confused and plagued by clumsiness and bad luck. The order to the aircraft carrier *Constellation* to sail from Subic Bay in the Philippines on December 30 quickly

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turned into a public-relations nightmare. Intended as a gesture of warning to the Russians and of reassurance to the Saudis, the action came to look like one more sign of American faintheartedness when it became known that instead of proceeding into the Indian Ocean, the carrier had dropped anchor off Singapore. Later, Administration sources rather limply explained that the carrier was never intended to proceed beyond Singapore, only to get closer to the crisis area in case of need. Another flagshowing exercise—the dispatch of a dozen U.S.A.F. F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia in January, first requested by the Saudis in December—turned out no less dismally when it became known that Spain had refused permission for a refueling stop and that the planes had been sent unarmed.

Both of these not very grand, all too halting gestures might be seen as all too fitting symbols of a policy of almost chronic irresolution. The overall orchestration of policy from Washington was bound to revive doubts about the President's talents for decisive leadership. And yet the roots of the American failure run deeper than tactical lapses, deeper into the past.

Only a fair-minded and patient tracing of these roots can produce an inquiry of any serious use to the future. It cannot be said too often that such an exercise in self-examination by the U.S. must not traffic in the emotional and divisive recrimination over "Who lost China?" so poisonous to the politics of the 1940's and 1950's. The recent history of U.S. policies toward Iran is not a tale conspicuous for wise prophets, long ignored, now entitled to raise their voices and point their fingers. Rather, the responsibility for failure seems widely enough shared to encourage some general sense of humility. The grave exaggeration of the personal power of the Shah to govern Iran was a misjudgment embraced with equal confidence by both Republican and Democratic Administrations. And the voices of doubt or dissent were no more audible in the halls of Congress than in the councils of the White House.

A debate weighing constructive political questions, rather than brandishing ad hominem accusations, probably must start with renewed awareness that other nations are not, after all, ours to "lose." If there is one lesson Americans should have learned from the Vietnam tragedy, it is that we do not possess the ability to decree the course of events in ancient countries deeply affected by their own histories, cultures, and religions. If the role of Buddhism in Southeast Asia often seemed politically confounding, the role of Islam in Iran has proved even more remarkable and baffling to U.S. policymakers.

There are other tough and challenging questions that the failure in Iran poses for architects of future diplomacy. There is the difficulty of accurately gauging the political and social impact of swift technological change upon such a society. There is the problem of "intelligence" in the broadest sense—the observant measuring of the play of political forces within a nation that is not a completely conventional totalitarian state, but rather a toughly, often brutally policed society that yet hesitantly tolerates some sporadic shows of political dissent and press freedom. On such a scene, the emissaries of both the Department of State and the CIA can maintain continuous and informative contact with the political opposition only at a certain risk—the risk of any contact being construed as active sympathy or encouragement. Yet there would appear to be even greater risk in relying on the assurances based on an autocratic regime's own self-assurance. And even in Iran it is not impossible that a more independent U.S. perception of the country's political instability

might have helped the Shah himself to be spared the full cost of his own self-delusion.

There finally arises the question critical to the global balance of power: if the U.S. cannot simply proclaim its pure political abstinence from the turmoil of such an arena, how *should* it make its concerned presence effectively known and felt? In 1968, the Soviet Union dealt with a popular threat to its stake in Czechoslovakia in its own way. But this is a way wholly incompatible with the U.S.'s declared values and principles. What are the legitimate and effective ways for the U.S. to safeguard vital interests in countries threatened by such social pressures and political disorders? Can these ways be reconciled with any understood code of conduct restraining any major power from merely exploiting and manipulating countries in ferment? And without some such agreed constraint, can detente prove workable?

These are some lasting questions posed by the unhappy events in Iran. They thrust far beyond the dilemmas of the immediate present or the frontiers of that country. And if we can grasp some realistic answers to them, we may somewhere else save what we could not guard there.

Mr. PROXMIRE. Mr. President, is it too soon to draw conclusions from events in Iran? Perhaps not. A few observations are relevant and not subject to post-crisis overreaction. First, arms did not buy us political or economic security. In fact, they may have placed this country in a position where they compromised billions of advanced developments of vital importance to our own defenses. Second, while full knowledge of facts during a crisis does not automatically make for sound decisions, the absence of them makes any reaction essentially a random choice. The vacillating on what regime to support in Iran is a classic case of policy by guesswork. Third, policy should not blind commonsense. Collecting intelligence information on internal events in Iran should not have been held hostage to the fears that any intrusion would be diplomatically unacceptable.

It is too late to apply these solutions to Iran. But it is not too late to be considering what could happen in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Morocco, Indonesia, or Pakistan. To what degree are we denying ourselves the capability to make correct decisions during a crisis in any one of these countries? Will enhanced arms sales to Saudi Arabia insure U.S. national interests there any more than they did in Iran? What substitutes are there for arms sales as a dominant instrument of U.S. foreign policy?

It is more important to avoid a future miscalculation than to argue over past mistakes. But it is difficult to feel confident that we will.